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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH AND ALGERIAN TAKES ON AU COMMISSIONER  
LAMAMRA'S VISIT

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 505

[1](#)B. NOUAKCHOTT 508

Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for reasons 1.5 (b and d)

[1](#)1. (C) The African Union's Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra made his third visit to Nouakchott September 14 and 15. Following his meeting with representatives of the international community (Ref A), Lamamra met with General Aziz. Ambassador met on September 16 with French Ambassador Michel Vandepoorter and Algerian Ambassador Rachid Chakib Kaid, both of whom had seen Lamamra after his meeting with Aziz.

[1](#)2. (C) According to both Ambassadors, Lamamra not only felt that he had been unable to make progress with Aziz but even that the latter had "taken a step back" in that he was evasive about earlier assurances given to the AU that Abdallahi would be released "soon." In fact, and although he asked, Lamamra did not even have the opportunity to visit Abdallahi in detention. Both Ambassadors agreed that the timing of Lamamra's visit was complicated by the simultaneous Ghazwani visit to Paris. The Algerian ambassador said that Lamamra told him that Aziz seemed to think the discussions there would be more fruitful. Lamamra reportedly told Aziz not to expect Ghazwani to come back with a different message. The French Ambassador said that he had not yet gotten a readout on the Ghazwani meeting but confirmed that he expected the same message to be conveyed in Paris.

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador Vandepoorter said that the visit was even further complicated by the reported terrorist attack on Mauritanian soldiers in the north (Ref B). He characterized it as a serious attack and said that Lamamra found him to be distracted by that threat and in a &military mode.<sup>8</sup> The Ambassador speculated that SNIM might have been the intended target. For his part, the Algerian Ambassador found the attack suspicious, noting that apparently no bodies had yet been found.

[1](#)4. (C) The French Ambassador also discussed his own visit to General Aziz, on instructions, on September 12 to make sure that Aziz understood that the French government,s call for Abdallahi,s return was not a call for a &definitive<sup>8</sup> return that would preclude further developments. Ambassador Vandepoorter said that he saw no sign that General Aziz intended to deviate from his current path.

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: Ambassador will attempt to get a readout on the Ghazwani visit either locally or during consultations in Paris on September 19. He will also try to get a sense

whether Vandepoorter's demarche of General Aziz represents a softening of the French position or merely encouragement to seize the opportunities for progress that would be open once Abdallhai was restored. If there is no progress in the days immediately following General Ghazwani's return to Nouakchott, there is likely to be no movement until the junta feels the bite of sanctions, or of a faltering economy or both.

Boulware